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DDA Memo 17/17

Auth: DDA REG. 77/1763

Date: 4 APR 1978 By: 020

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY Malaya - Siam - Netherlands East Indies

DATE: 25X1X6

INFO. [REDACTED]

SUBJECT Opinions expressed by Dato Onn

DIST. 16 January 1947

PAGES 2

SUPPLEMENT

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ORIGIN

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The opinions of Dato Onn, head of the United Malays' National Organization, on various topics in Southeast Asian politics, are as follows:

1. Malaya - Siam Border: Dato Onn states the UMNO is aware of Malay-Siamese friction in the southern Siamese provinces, but he does not believe the Malays there are sufficiently interested or politically aroused to start a separatist movement for inclusion within the Malayan Union. Shortly after the establishment of the UMNO, Dato Onn was visited by a "representative" of the Siamese Malays who presented an unsigned petition requesting UMNO assistance to "deliver the Malays in Siam from the terrible yoke of oppression of the Siamese". Dato Onn took no action in the matter for two reasons:
 - a. If the plight of the Malays had really been so serious, it would have come to his attention through more than one source.
 - b. He suspected the "representative" to be an agent of the Siamese officials in the area who were trying to discover how much attention the UMNO was paying to the area and what moves it was contemplating regarding the Malay minority.
2. Indonesia: Although Dato Onn expressed a certain amount of confidence in the progress of the Dutch-Indonesian discussions in Batavia, he expects a deterioration of cohesion among the various Indonesian factions. He stated there is already some dissatisfaction among the Javanese concerning the fact that important cabinet posts were given to Sumatrans. Although he does not expect an immediate split between Java and Sumatra, he does anticipate a number of serious internal problems in the young republic.
3. Immigration: Malaya may be faced with a labor shortage in early 1947. It is Dato Onn's hope that with the steady withdrawal of Indian labor this can be replaced by Indonesians from the Minangkabau District in Sumatra, who are closely akin in language, customs and race with the local Malays. (25X1A6a comment: It is quite possible the British may not be anxious to allow a large influx of Sumatran Malays into Malaya, as they have been exposed to Indonesian propaganda and government for over a year.)
4. Malay Nationalist Party: During their first anniversary celebrations, the MNP claimed a party membership of 100,000, which would represent an increase of

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40,000 since July 1946. Dato Onn explained this saying that one of the Indian newspapers in Singapore, in an article of the history of the MNP, credited the party with 100,000 members. Rather than officially denying the statement, the MNP decided it was an opportune moment to boost their membership by 40% - thus the figure of 100,000 remains unchallenged.

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